MARVEL
CONAN THE KING
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23
JULY
ORDEAL

THE PALACE STABLES IN TARANTIA, ROYAL SEAT OF AQUILONIA...

I'LL NOT STAND FOR YOUR PREACHING *JUSTICE* AT ME, TROCERO!

BARON AEMILIUS IS GUILTY AS A FOX WITH HEN FEATHERS IN ITS MAW.

CROM! I'LL SHEAR HIS TRAITOR'S HEAD AT THE GULLET!

SILVESTRI / SHERWOOD

ORDEAL

AND WHERE'S THE *PROOF KING CONAN?* ONE BLOODIED CLOAK EMBROIDERED WITH THE ARMS OF BARON AEMILIUS?

THAT AND THE SIGNET RING OF *PRINCE CONN?*

...NAY, ALL TOO LITTLE EVIDENCE HAVE THE *BLACK DRAGONS* BROUGHT BACK FROM THEIR MISSION TO THE NORTH WHERE THE PRINCE WAS SLAIN.*

*LAST ISH --OWS.

EVIDENCE, MAN?!

NO SOONER DID THE DRAGONS RETURN YESTERDAY, AEMILIUS CREPT FROM THE COURT LIKE A THIEF IN THE NIGHT.

THERE'S A BLOODY MARK ON HIS BUSINESS!

A FLEEING MAN HARDLY LEAVES WORD OF HIS DESTINATION, MY LIEGE.

HA! OUR COUNT'S GROWN A TRUSTING FELLOW, EH, *PROSPERO?*

THOUGHT IS *FREE*, CONAN.

YOUR STEEDS, GOOD MY LORDS.

YOU MERELY QUIBBLE WITH THE KING, TROCERO, FOR HE'LL HAVE HIS WAY, REGARDLESS.

COME, THE SOONER WE CLAP OUR BARON IN IRONS, THE SOONER WE CAN BREAKFAST ON HERRING AND ALE.

2

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I'VE NO DOUBT, BARON AEMILIUS HAS COST ME MY *SON*. BUT I'LL SOON TASTE THE BLOOD OF VENGEANCE.

HNNH!

WELL, COUNT TROCERO? SHALL WE GO?

AYE, MY LORD...

THERE'S NO DOUBTING CONAN'S FULLY RECOVERED FROM THE POISONED GOBLET HE DRAINED AT PRINCE CONN'S FUNERAL*

...NO DOUBT.

*ISH #21--OWS.

WE'RE OFF, SOLDIERS. RIDE HARD AND PRESS YOUR MOUNTS.

GADDUP

GADDUP

GADDUP

INNOCENT, IS HE, POLIX?! HA! THEN YE'RE AS DEAF AS YE ARE UGLY!

AEMILIUS IS A THIEF AN' A MURDERER. AYE. THEM'S THE VERY WORDS THAT CROSSED THE KING'S OWN LIPS.

NOT IN A DEVIL'S AGE.

COUNT TROCERO BE SAYIN' THE PRINCE'S CLOAK AN' THE BARON'S RING ARE NO MAN'S PROOF.

THEN YE'VE STRAW IN YER EARS. 'TWAS THE BARON'S CLOAK AN' THE--

FAITH, HERE'S THE *PRINCESS RADEGUND* RETURNED FROM RIDING.

A PLEASANT MORN YER HAVIN', MISSY HIGHNESS, HEY WHAT?

PLEASANT ENOUGH BUT FOR THESE TWO WATCHDOGS MOTHER'S SET TO FOLLOW ME ABOUT SINCE MY BROTHER CONN WAS SLAIN.

SURE, BUT THE QUEEN'S ONLY TENDIN' TO YER PROTECTION, AS WE GROOMS BE TENDIN' TO YER PALFREY HERE IN THE STABLES, MILADY!

THANK YOU, LUCIUS.

BUT MY FATHER AND THE KING'S MEN GALLOP UP A STORM.

WHERE ARE THEY OFF TO?

ONLY WILD RUMORS, NOT TO BE TRUSTED MILADY--

NAY, POLIX MISSPEAKS, YER HIGHNESS...

...SUSPICIONS IS ABROAD. THEY BE SAYIN' THE BARON AEMILIUS IS BEHIND THE PLOT WHAT KILLED YOUR POOR BROTHER--

EH--?

MITRA! 'TIS ONE OF THE KING'S *BLACK DRAGONS!*

HAIL, PRINCESS!

DO YOU HAVE A NAME...?

AYE, MY LADY. I AM LEONIDAS.

YOUR HUMBLE SERVANT SALUTES YOU, MY LADY. GOOD DAY.

WHO WAS THAT? I DON'T RECALL SEEING HIM BEFORE.

LEONIDAS IS NEW TO THE RANKS O' THE DRAGONS, MISSY.

IT'S COUNT TROCERO WHAT INSISTS A DRAGON BE BRINGIN' UP THE *REAR* WHENEVER YER ROYAL SIRE SETS OFF.

PREVENTION'S BETTER THAN CURE, HEY WHAT?

LEONIDAS... A HANDSOME NAME...

POLIX, HAS MY BROTHER *TAURUS* BEEN TO THE STABLES YET?

TRUTH TO TELL, MILADY, HIS STALLION BE GONE, THOUGH NOR LUCIUS NOR MESELF BRUSHED HIM DOWN FER THE YOUNG PRINCE THIS MORN.

SHORTLY, AFTER NOON, THE MANOR HOUSE OF *TIMON FLAVIUS* IN THE COUNTRY-SIDE ABOUT *TARANTIA*...

♪ FA LA LA... A CHILD IS BORN... ♪

MY THANKS TO YOU FOR STEALING FROM COURT TO GRACE THIS FESTIVE OCCASION WITH YOUR PRESENCE, COUSIN *AEMILIUS*.

MITRA'S BLOOD, WE ARE FAST FRIENDS, *TIMON*, AND I SHARE IN THE JOY OF YOUR SON'S BIRTH AS THOUGH THE PUP WERE MY OWN.

BE ASSURED, THOUGH, SUCH CHAOS REIGNS AT COURT OF LATE THAT NONE WILL MISS ME IN THE *COUNCIL OF BARONS* TODAY.

NAY, SINCE THE PRINCE IS SLAIN, THE KING'S WRAPPED IN PRIVATE AFFAIRS LIKE A CAT IN TWINE. CONAN SHIRKS HIS DUTIES...

...THOUGH IT'S CLEAR YOUR FOWLERS DO NOT SHIRK THEIRS, COUSIN.

THERE'S THRUSH AND QUAIL A' PLENTY AT THIS BOARD!

LET'S HAVE THE BABE HERE, AEMILIUS, YOU'LL RAISE A TOAST?

THE DEVIL TRY TO STOP ME!

HO-HO! THERE'S HIS FATHER'S CHIN--

--HIS MOTHER'S NOSE.

'TIS SAID THAT HE WHO HAS *NO SON* KNOWS *NO PRIDE*. IN MITRA'S NAME, LET US--

CRACK! CRASH!

VILLAIN, WE'VE FOUND YOU OUT!

NOW, AEMILIUS, A KILLING STROKE FROM MY STEEL, CORRUPTED TRAITOR!

I BESEECH YOU MAJESTY-- *VIRTUE*-- NOT RECKLESS VENGEANCE, WHAT WILL A *DEAD MAN* REVEAL?

TRAITOR?! I?!

SEIZE THE VILLAIN WHO DARED SLAY MY SON!

SLEW THE PRINCE--AEMILIUS? NAY, MY LORD KING CONAN, THIS IS SOME MONSTROUS MISTAKE--!

SAVE YOUR WORDS, COUSIN. THE MAN'S MAD.

THOUGH I'LL WAGER HE YET UNDERSTANDS A BRANDISHED BLADE.

HA! IS AQUILONIA FALLEN SO LOW THAT SHE MUST SUIT HER *KITCHENMEN* IN HAUBERKS?

BLAST! WILL YOU HANG ON MY GARMENTS WHILE THAT JAPING CUR HOLDS OUR LEG ONNAIRES AT BAY?

OFF OF ME--!

CROM HANG YOU, YOU BRAWLING, BLASPHEMOUS, INSOLENT SON OF A SHE-DOG!

WHERE IS MY SON'S BODY?!

THESE ARE SLY TRICKS OF DESPERATION, CONAN--

--BUT, MITRA'S BLOOD, I'LL NOT PLAY YOUR DUPE

THANG

THAK

NOW, DISSEMBLER, I'LL HEAR YOU HOWL YOUR GUILT TO THE TOP OF CROM'S CRAGGY MOUNT!

WHAT?! CHARGED, ADJUDGED, AND CONVICTED ALL IN ONE BREATH?

IS THAT JUSTICE IN YOUR C.MMER AN WILDS, BARBARIAN?

YOU WOMAN-HEARTED SCOUNDRELS, DOES T TAKE FOUR OF YOU TO SUBDUE ONE DOG?

BIND HIM FOR THE PALACE DUNGEONS!

IF YOU MEAN TO MURDER ME, WHY NOT *HERE*, DEVIL, AND OVER WITH IT NOW?

I'D CRACK YOUR SPINE LIKE A GOOSE BONE FOR THE MARROW, AEMILIUS--

--BUT I'LL F RST LEARN THE TRUTH OF CONN S DEATH BEFORE YOU KNOW THE *PLEASURE* OF DY NG

HA! YOU'LL GET NAUGHT BUT SCORN WHILE I STILL BREATHE AT THE NOSTRILS, TYRANT

ELSEWHERE IN AQUILONIA, A WIZARD CONJURES IN THE CASTLE OF BARON MALORIC...

I HAVE SEEN ENOUGH IN THE SMOKY PRISM OF TIME.

... AND SENSE EVEN NOW THAT THE MIGHTY KING OF AQUILONIA ACCUSES AN INNOCENT MORTAL OF *OUR* DEADLY DEEDS...

...AS I PREDICTED HE WOULD, GARGOYLE, WHEN FIRST WE PLANTED THE *FALSE CLOAK* OF BARON AEMILIUS AND THE *ROYAL SIGNET RING* OF THE SLAIN *PRINCE CONN* FOR THE *BLACK DRAGONS* TO FIND. *

*LAST ISH--OWZ

YES, I WILL SEE THE CIMMERIAN SLOWLY RACKED IN SPIRIT AND TORTURED IN MIND... AS WAS I TO THESE MANY YEARS...

THEN WILL I LURE HIM TO HIS RED AND CERTAIN DOOM...

I MUST HURRY

FOR IF MY WEAK-WITTED SISTER *RADEGUND* FINDS ME GONE AND BAWLS THE NEWS TO MOTHER

BY THE SERPENT--

--THERE'LL SOON BE AN ARMY AFTER ME!

OPEN UP THERE *MAD ZANDRA!*

NOK NOK

HEK, HEK! IS IT YOU COME AGAIN, DARKEYES, AND THE MOON NOT RISEN NINE TIMES SINCE LAST WE BARGAINED?

WHAT IS IT HIMSELF BE BRINGING AND HIS POUCH FULL OF THIS NOON?

HEK, HEK! SURE YOU RE A *CUTPURSE** AND A GREAT ONE AT THE TRADE...

FOR *THERE'S* A RICH VISION AS EVER BEDAZZLED ZANDRA'S SIGHTS!

* *THIEF* --

I'M NO *THIEF*, WITCH-WOMAN, AND IT'S NO CONCERN OF YOURS.

JUST LET ME HAVE -

--AYE, AYE, MUMMY AND MARJORAM AND POWDERED TOAD,..

. FOR YOUR WICKED THOUGHTS BE CLEAR TO ME AS THE STARS AT MIDNIGHT.

AND I'M WELL PLEASED TO BE DOING YOUR WISH,

THUNK

THERE, THERE, AND THERE.

BUT MIND YOU, TIE THIS BELT OF DEAD MAN'S SKIN ABOUT YOUR WAIST BEFORE YOU DO BE CONJURING.

MESEEMS *YOURSELF* SHOULD BE ZANDRA'S *OWN APPRENTICE*, DARKEYES...

. FOR I'M AFTER TH NK-ING YOU'RE MOST CUNNING, WITH HEART AS BLACK AS A JACKDAW PERCHING A MOONLIT OAK.

AND IT'S NOT LONG 'TIL I KNOW SURELY, FOR, BY HEKATA, THE *BELT* I'VE GIVEN YOU IS *BEWITCHED* TO *BRING YOU* WITHIN MY POWER...

THAT NIGHT, IN THE CAVERNS BENEATH THE ROYAL PALACE

DEFY ME, WILL YOU--?!

I'LL CONFISCATE YOUR BARONY--!

AYE! A RED COCK WILL CROW BLOODY DAWN OVER YOUR ESTATES--

WHERE'S MY SLAIN SON?!

I'LL SEE YOU IN HELL BEFORE YOU BREAK ME, PIG!

SPAT!

NAY THEN--I'LL BREAK YOU AEM . US--!

I'LL BREAK YOU, DOG!

CREEEAAK

KLAK

CREEAAK

KLAK

NOT ONE WORD

CRREEAAAK

KLAK

I REGRET TO FIND YOU HERE, MY LORD.

THIS CURSED CHAMBER'S NOT KNOWN USE SINCE THE TYRANT *NUMEDIDES'* DAYS

HA! *COUNT TROCERO*, CONAN'S SPANIEL!

THE COUNCIL OF BARONS ACCEDES TO AEMILIUS' DEMAND FOR A TRIAL BY ORDEAL RATHER THAN INQUEST COME THE MORROW THOUGH

BE WARE CONSCIENCE THE KING'S BEARS ANY GUILT IN THIS MATTER

CONAN DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE OF YOURSELF?

LET THE ORDEAL PROVE YOUR GUILT THEN, VILLAIN.

UNLOOSE ME AND I'LL PROVE YOUR DEATH CIMMERIAN SCUM.

UNLOOSE ME AND I'LL SPOIL YOUR FACE DOG!

RANT ON, CONAN...

STILL YOU'LL DIE LIKE THE BARBARIAN SCUM YOU ARE...

ARE YOU LEAV

MY LORD?

I'LL EASE THESE CURES, AEMILIUS

IS THERE A PLAGUE OF SULLENNESS STRIKES THE COURT? FIRST THE KING, NOW YOU COUNT PASS WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A MORTAL GREETING?

BLESSED MITRA, BARON, COULD [illegible]

AND CERTAIN DEATH?

YOU OLD FOOL. DO [illegible] A COWARD TO SLAY [illegible]?

HAD I SO HATED THE BARBARIAN I'D HAVE SLAIN *HIM* NOT HIS BANE

NAY, I'LL DIE BEFORE I ANSWER HIS CHARGES OR CRY MERCY

[illegible] KNOW YOU [illegible] YOUR KING DON'T YOU HEY?

HA HA HA [illegible] AFRAID OF THE HOUNDS, COUNCILOR?

NAY NAY NAY NAY NAY [illegible] WITH YOU, PUBLIUS...

FOR THESE ARE FRIENDS

[illegible]

BUT I'VE ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD BEASTS BETTER THAN...THAN CIVILIZED MEN.

THEY DON'T MASK THEIR ACTS WITH... DECEIT, AYE, AND DEVIOUSNESS...

NO FETCH!

MY LORD, UM, BARON AEMILIUS IS A STUBBORN MAN INDEED, A PROUD MAN, AND--HOW SHALL I SAY-- A MAN OF WILL...

...NOT UNLIKE, UM, *YOURSELF*, AT TIMES, SIRE?

BY MY MORTAL EYES, 'TIS FRUSTRATION ITSELF NOT TO KNOW THE TRUTH OF PRINCE CONN'S DEATH, NOR TO BE ABLE TO METE OUT TRUE JUSTICE...

...BUT SIRE... DO YOU TRULY BELIEVE IN YOUR HEART THAT AEMILIUS IS GUILTY--

MY *HEART*?!? MY HEART? AM I THEN TO RULE AQUILONIA WITH MY HEART?

MY *HEART* COUNCILOR, IS BROKEN, AND CRIES OUT FOR *VENGEANCE*! ALL EVIDENCE POINTS TO *AEMILIUS*!

TELL *ME*, PUBLIUS. WHAT AM I TO *DO*?

DO, MY LORD YOU MUST DO WHAT YOUR CONSCIENCE DICTATES YOU MUST DO WHAT IS *RIGHT*.

THE NEXT MORNING OUTSIDE THE JUSTICE HALL...

THEY'RE OFF TO TRY AEMILIUS BY WATER!

A POX ON HIS SCURVY SOUL!

THERE'S THE PRINCE'S MURDERER!

TO BE DRAWN IN THE CART OF DISGRACE IS TOO GOOD FOR HIM!

BOO!!

BA-RUM BA-RUM

HEAR YE, HEAR YE. ACCUSATION OF HIGH TREASON AND MURDER BE BROUGHT THIS DAY BY HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS, *CONAN THE KING*, AGAINST *BARON AEMILIUS*...

..FOR WHICH CHARGES THE FULL COUNCIL SUBMITS AEMILIUS TO ORDEAL BY WATER

IF MITRA DO *PRESERVE* HIM FROM DEATH BY DROWNING, THEN COURT AND COUNCIL SHALL DEEM HIM INNOCENT

MITRA JUDGES

((((

WITH MY

GLUB

DYING KOFF KOFF BREATH I CURSE

CURSE YOU KOFF TYRANT

GLUB

GUILTY GUILTY GUILTY

CROM! I CANNOT--

BLESSED MITRA!

SPLASH

PLASH

NAY! WHERE'S JUSTICE?

BOO!

DOES THE KING RISK HEAVEN'S WRATH TO SAVE A *MURDERER* PROVEN *GUILTY*?

'TIS MADNESS!

LATER THAT DAY IN THE CHAMBER.

SO MANY WEEKS AND STILL UNCONSCIOUS?

I PRAY MITRA SOON GRANT YOU FULL RECOVERY

...FOR YOU ARE SOLE SURVIVOR OF THE MASSACRE IN GUNDERLAND.. *

* ISSUE # 20- [illegible]

AND THUS THE LAST SOUL TO HAVE SEEN OUR LOST SON CONN BEFORE HIS DEATH.

OUR DEAR LORD MITRA ANSWERS YOUR PRAYERS THIS VERY MOMENT--

--YOU ARE THE QUEEN ZENOBIA?

OR YOU SPEAK FROM HEAVEN?

I MUST TELL THE KING YOU ARE REVIVED!

REVIVED? NAY, GONE TO HEAVEN MORE LIKELY

FOR CAN ANY SAINT BE MORE RADIANT AND FAIR THAN THIS PERFECT VISION THAT GREETS MY EYES?

SCENE

NOW THAT THE [illegible] HAVE [illegible] I WILL SPEAK WITH HIM

I MUST [illegible] HEAR OF CONN'S LAST YOUTHFUL HOUR

BUT THIS SURVIVOR [illegible] ACCOUNT IN NO WAY IMPLICATES AEMILIUS,

AND YET ZENOBIA—THE BARON FAILED THE ORDEAL?

IF THE ORDEAL SATISFIED YOU OF HIS GUILT, WHY DID YOU DIVE TO SAVE HIM?

ALL'S CONFUSION! WHERE'S JUSTICE IN A BOUND MAN'S DROWNING?

CROM! WHEN WILL I KNOW THE CERTAIN SLAYER OF MY SON?!

AND THEN, DEAR CONAN, WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL IT MAKE?

WE'VE *RADEGUND* TO CONCERN OURSELVES WITH NOW--

-- AND *TAURUS* WHOM YOU NEGLECT, I FEAR, AS THOUGH HE WERE A FOUNDLING

NOT YOUR OWN CHILD

TAURUS?

THE WHELP HAS *TOO MUCH* OF HIS MOTHER'S BLESSING, AND *NOTHING* OF HIS FATHER'S BLOOD IN HIM

MIDNIGHT

THERE. MARJORAM AND MUMMY AND POWDERED TOAD

NOW TO TIE THIS BELT OF DEAD MAN'S SKIN ABOUT MY WAIST...

... AND ALL'S PREPARED

IN THE NAME OF SET..

SERPENT LORD OF THE STYGIAN DARK

PAFF

NO!

FLAASH

SKRAAA

MITRA NO! THE PRINCE!

Alan Zelenetz
SCRIPT

Marc Silvestri
BREAKDOWNS

Geof Isherwood
FINISHES

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LETTERER

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EDITOR

Larry Hama
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Jim Shooter
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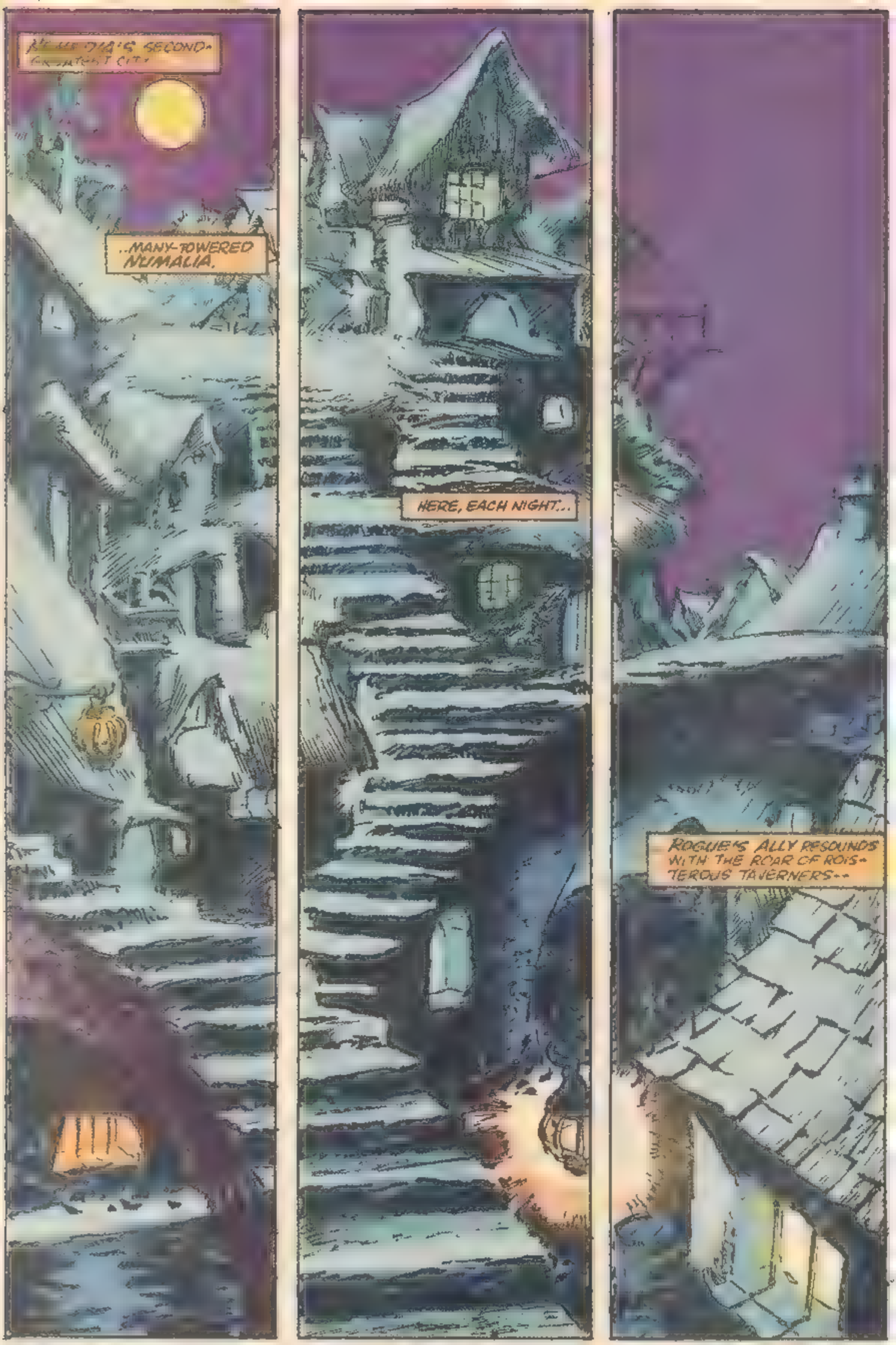
Long given up by family and friends for dead at the hands of mysterious assassins in Gunderland, Aquilonia's Crown Prince Conan II, who goes by the diminutive "Conn," was captured by a roving band of slavers. After several weeks of conditioning, Conn was sold at auction to a Corinthian nobleman for work in the fields. At the cost of her own life, the Corinthian's young stepdaughter aided the young prince to escape from captivity. Weeks later Prince Conn, unarmed and penniless, arrives in Nemedia . . .

By Alan Zelenetz and Mart Silvestri

Stan Lee PRESENTS:

CONAN

SON OF THE BARBARIAN KING



LETTERED BY **RICHARD PARKER** COLORED BY **GEORGE ROUSSOS** EDITED BY **JIM OWSLEY**

-- BEGGARS AND BOOZERS BLACKGUARDS AND BOOZ-

. CUTPURSES, RASCALS, AND SWEATY WENCHES PLYING PLEASURE'S MANY TRADES

HERE THIS NIGHT, AMIDST THIS SAD COLLECTION OF LOW-LIFE VERMIN...

A DREAMING PRINCE

AYE, MOTHER

WHEN YOU ARE ONE DAY KING...

...THE WEALTH OF AQUILONIA WILL SERVE YOUR WILL AND PLEASURE, DEAR CONN.

USE IT TO SPREAD BEAUTY, TRUTH AND PEACE THROUGHOUT THE REALM.

THUS SHALL YOU ADD HONOR TO YOUR NAME..

..AND HAVING GAINED HONOR, GAINED ALL

HNHR

GET HOME TO YOUR WET-NURSE--

--YOU BEARDLESS BRAT! I'LL HAVE THAT CHAIR.

FIND YOURSELF ANOTHER SEAT AND I'VE NO QUARREL WITH YOU, FELLOW.

WHY YOU INSOLENT, MAGGOT-RIDDEN STRIPLING!

CHUD

CIVILITIES BE DAMNED THEN, YOU WEATHER-BEATEN OX!

WE'LL SETTLE THIS WITH BARE FISTS!

HA!

I PREFER A QUICK FIGHT TO A CLEAN ONE, DOG

CRUNCH

STIKT

STIKT

SURE, IT'LL COST THE LAD HIS LIFE--

--BUT MITRA'S BLOOD HE'S A *LUSTY COLT* FOR ALL THAT!

WHUD

BRASH

DON'T BE BURYIN' A KICK N' CORPSE--

--I'LL YET WAGER TEN COPPERS ON THE *NAKED YOUTH*--!

KK

JH NAY MAKE THAT TWENTY COPPERS ON THE BEARDED BAG O' GUTS--

CRASH!

MITRA! MY HEAD'S POUNDING LIKE AN ANVIL--

NOW I'LL HAVE YOUR HEART RAW--!

CATCH, MY FRIEND!

NAY, THERE'S POOR SPORT, THE WHELP'S UNARMED

LET'S SEE TO THAT THEN, EH?

HO! YOU'VE A SUDDEN LIMP NOW THAT I'VE A *BLADE* TO ANSWER *YOURS*, COWARD.

SWK

YAH!

HAH!

STIIK

CHAK

UNPH!

THUNK!

WHAK!

KRAK!

KILL HIM!

KILL HIM!

KILL HIM LADDIE!

KILL! KILL KILL!

THANK MITRA

THANKS

THUNK

HOLD UP BOY!

I'M NO BOY I'VE PROVEN THAT

NO, OF COURSE NOT I QUITE AGREE - NO BOY, NO BOY AT ALL

JUST A MANNER OF SPEAKING

THAT WAS RARE GOOD FORM YOU SHOWED IN THERE, FRIEND, YES, RARE GOOD FORM

WELL, HAVE YOU NOTHING TO ANSWER, FELLOW?

BLAST! WHY SO SULLEN? SOME DOE-EYED WENCH SNATCH YOUR PURSE

OR IS IT YOUR HEART MAYHAP?

STILL, I'VE YET TO SEE THE MOURNFUL COUNTENANCE THAT WASN'T BRIGHTENED BY A PALMFUL OF GOLD--

HA! THOUGHT THAT'D PERK YOUR EARS LIKE A HUNTING HOUND'S!

THEN, BY BEL, HONEST *RUFFIUS* HAS GOT HIMSELF A PARTNER, EH?

YOU SWEAR BY THE GOD OF THIEVES?

KNOW YOU A MORE HONORABLE PROFESSION UNDER THE MOON THAT PROMISES WEALTH TO PURCHASE YOUR DREAMS?

FATHER! MOTHER! TO BE HOME AT LAST!

AYE, YOU'VE A PARTNER, RUFFIUS I AM C

... CONAN.

GOOD, *GOOD*, CONAN

NOW THERE'S A RICH MERCHANT'S MANSION I'VE HAD MY EYE ON NEEDS TWO MEN TO SCALE THE WALL ..

SOON, NEARBY.

AFTER YOU'RE WED THEN, *LEPIDUS*, IT'S SETTLED--

--THE WEALTH OF MY MERCHANT'S YEARS WILL SERVE YOUR WILL AND PLEASURE

THANK YOU, GRANDFATHER.

ONLY I EXPECT YOU WILL CONTINUE CHILD, AS I HAVE DONE.

...TO SHARE MITRA'S GOOD FORTUNE WITH THOSE *LESS* FORTUNATE THAN OURSELVES--

--THE BEGGARS AT OUR GATE AND SUCH AS THOSE

I'LL BE AS GENEROUS AND HONORABLE AS YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN, SIRE.

THAT'S A NOBLE SPRT LEP DUS

I'LL JUST VISIT THE TREASURE TOWER BEFORE RETIRING AS IS MY OLD MAN'S HABIT. SLEEP WELL

BY THE *SAINTS!*

RUFFIUS, YOU SWORE THERE'D BE NO ONE--

JUST GET ON OUT OF HERE, OLD FATHER, AND THERE'LL BE NO HARM--

THIEVES!

RUFFIUS, LET'S BE OFF, BEFORE--

MY LIFE'S WEALTH...

THIEVES!

THIEVES!

RUFFIUS!

WAIT, I'LL TEACH THIS OLD FOOL A LESSON!

NO!

ARE YOU MAD, MAN?!

THUD

MITRA! NO! PERHAPS HE CAN BE SAVED--

WHY DIDN'T YOU LISTEN TO ME, OLD MAN, THEN--?

RUFFIUS?!

IS THIS A THIEF'S HONOR, TO LEAVE ME BEHIND SO--

GRAND-FATHER?!

SEIZE THE MURDERER!

TO BE CONTINUED...

KING CONAN

% MARVEL COMICS GROUP
387 Park Avenue South
New York, New York 10016

JIM OWSLEY
EDITOR

Editor:

Months from now, while Marveldom assembled is still acclaiming CONAN THE KING #21— deservedly— few people will recall the name Tomas Denoir. That's too bad, because Alan Zelenetz created one of the most ironic characters I've seen in a comic when he gave us the king's wine steward.

Rick S. Jones
Argos, IN

Dear Alan, Marc, Dave, Jim O, Larry, and Jim S:

I love the new CONAN THE KING, which started with issue #20. More power to you people; this magazine has jumped five places higher on my Marvel Comics reading list. The Prince Conn feature looks to be an excellent series. The Michael Wm. Kaluta covers are fabulous, and "Conan Meets Stick-Man" was hilarious.

George Audis Williams
Angie, LA

Dear Alan,

To tell you the truth, I've never been a big Conan fan. Sure I read the book instead of a steady diet of Super Heroes, but I was never very excited about a Conan book. CONAN THE KING has changed all that.

I think the son of Conan strip has the potential for greatness. Just keep it up. Nice art by Mr. Silvestri, too.

Ralph L. Griffith
Ypsilanti, MI

Ho, Fellow Cimmerians!

Mitra and Ishtar be praised! CONAN THE KING #21 was by far one of the best stories in this, the Hyborian age! Alan Zelenetz of Aquilonia and Marc Silvestri of Cimmeria are the best adventure writer and artist team since Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams!

Arcelio Rodriguez, Jr.
Bronx, N.Y.

Dear Jim,

CONAN THE KING is truly a fantastic comic and getting better with each successive issue. I definitely would love to see more of King Conan's son Taurus. Please correct me if I'm wrong but doesn't he favor his mother more than he does his sire?

Donavon R. Ice Jr.
Elisabethtown, PA

Taurus, Conan's youngest son, does indeed seem to favor his mother, at least *physically*, Donavon. He shares her auburn hair (which the Merry Marvel Plate-Making Society graciously rendered *purple* in issue #21), and perhaps more of his mother's features than his father's. However, we belive the similarity ends there. Tune in next issue, which centers totally on Taurus, and draw your own conclusions.

Dear Jim,

I have just reread CONAN THE KING #21 and decided you folks were due for a pat on the back. In all the years I've been reading comics (Mitra preserve me, almost 20!), I have never been so excited about an issue. The script, art, and especially the characterization were stunning. This story has raised comics from a pleasant passtime to a true art form. Issue #21 was literature in the finest tradition of storytelling.

Crom's bones! If this sort of production continues, the Conan people are going to set a standard that's going to be tough for the industry to maintain.

Looking forward to number 22.

Denny Lepley
Hyndiman, PA

Dear CONAN THE KING Crew,

I just finished reading CONAN THE KING #21 for the second time. The cover was great and so was the story. I also like your new name and logo.

Ernest Knight
No Address Given

Dear Jim:

How can you justify it? What are your reasons? I mean, if you're going to publish such action-packed issues of CONAN THE KING how can you justify publishing the book only six times a year?!

You guys are definitely putting us through the grinder by making us wait two whole months for the next issue. Could you please go monthly? Other than that, the stories are great. Keep up the good work.

Denis Vaillancourt
Ontario, Canada

Who knows, Denis? If CONAN THE KING attracts a large enough following to support a monthly switchover, we'll do it. In the meantime, why not satisfy your barbarian bloodlust with the latest monthly issues of CONAN THE BARBARIAN and our companion black and white mag THE SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN? If you need more than that... we suggest professional help...

Dear People,

The changes that CONAN THE KING are taking are fantastic. After years of battling monsterous demons, obnoxious sorcerers and the like, now he is facing his most formidable enemy— his own emotions and just how to cope with them. And this is no easy task for one who is used to solving his problems with the swish of a sword and the plop of a head. As a consequence of his inability to vent his remorse over the loss of his son, we are shown the darker side of Conan's nature, such as his hitting the captain, belting his cup bearer, making us sympathize with his subjects who think him halfway off his rocker (or his throne as the case may be). Because of this, this magazine is more intriguing, more realistic so to speak. Instead of facing unbelievable foes he is fighting the inner demons of his mind— his emotions. I just hope in future issues there will continue to be a Conn back-up feature so that both he and his father can develop more, with Conn maturing on his own and Conan coping with unaccustomed emotions and situations. And last but not least, let's see more of his previously ignored kids, alright?

Kevin Lindenmuth
University of Michigan

Alright! Next issue's "A Witch's Tale" deals almost exclusively with Taurus, while issue #25's "Daggers" features a special tale focusing on the Princess Radegund. See? You ask; you get! Only from Marvel!

Dear Jim,

The new CONAN THE KING #21 was great! My friends and I have been reading your magazines for years. They all got a kick out of Stick-Man meets Conan!

Stickman
Newport, RI

Uh... okay.

A WITCH'S TALE

I cornered **Michael Wm. Kaluta** at the Marvel Christmas party and asked him how my witch was doing. **Michael** had volunteered to help **Alan Zelenetz** and myself create a new kind of "wicked" witch; one that had never been seen before. No easy task. Keeping **Michael's** attention amidst a legion of gorgeous women agressively undulating to the strains of *"Louie Louie"*, courtesy of senior editor **Larry Hama's** '56 stratocaster (that's an electric guitar, 'natch), was no easy task either. In fact, as soon as I started talking shop, both **Jim (DREADSTAR) Starlin** and **John (FANTASTIC FOUR, ALPHA FLIGHT) Byrne,** who had been hovering nearby, promptly split to quarters unknown (I suppose to pursue the undulators). However, **Michael** is just a nice guy (he can't help it), and so we proceeded to hammer out some ideas and within a few days Michael gave us Mad Zandra, who makes her first undisguised appearance within these pages.

Mad Zandra is a new experience in witches. **Alan (Mr. Authenticity) Zelenetz** has been spending so much time at his local public library researching her that they're going to name the new wing after him. Both **Dave Simons,** who will be guest-penciling next month (isn't it sneaky of me to slip that in like that?), and **Marc Silvestri** (who will be penciling and inking the Conn solo adventure) have adapted Mr. **Kaluta's** little witch to their own unique styles. "Fragments: A Witch's Tale" will be the most off-beat **CONAN THE KING** story you'll read all year. Best of all, it will be wrapped by a full-color **Michael Wm. Kaluta** painting of his own little girl.

CONAN THE KING #24: "A Witch's Tale". **Kaluta, Simons,** and **Silvestri.** Read it, and find out which witch is which.

Jim Owsley

A NEW GENERATION OF SUPER-HEROES — FOR READERS OF ALL GENERATIONS!

BY LOUISE SIMONSON, JUNE BRIGMAN AND BOB WIACEK

ON SALE MAY 1

Bullpen Bulletins

PRICE INCREASE?

Nah. Not yet, anyway. I can't guarantee that our prices for comics won't ever go up, but, barring catastrophe, they won't for a while — long while. These are the facts — you guys out there are giving us your support like never before (and I hope that means you think we're earning it!). Therefore, we can pay the bills, pay the artists, and bank a few nickels. Therefore, we don't have to up our prices. Therefore, we won't! We'll hold out as long as we can. Stick with us and we'll do our best to hold the line. We're in this together!

I GAVE A SPEECH . . .

. . . at a press conference at the giant Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Nevada, a few weeks ago. The press conference was to announce the new line of Marvel Comics *computer games* being launched by Adventure International, Inc. My speech went something like this:

> Hi, there! I'm Jim Shooter, Editor in Chief of Marvel Comics. Unlike myself, my speech is very short. Marvel Comics is number one in adventure stories, and Adventure International, Incorporated is number one in computer adventure games. Together we're going to conquer the world. Thank you!

Scott Adams heads up Adventure International, and he is to computer games as Stan Lee is to comics. He is *the man*. Scott is also a Marvel Comics fan, as are a whole bunch of the people who work for him down at his Florida base of operations. They wanted their games to be right on — as closely woven into the Marvel Universe and continuity as possible. So, editor Bob Budiansky, creative genius John Byrne and I got together with Scott to plot out the entire game series *and* a matching set of comics — a Limited Series — which links it to the mainstream of Marvel.

What we (mostly John) came up with, I think, is great!

The game series is called the *Questprobe Series*. The first game featuring the Hulk and Doctor Strange will be on sale about May 1st at places which sell computer software *and* at your local comics shop. Every three months or so thereafter, another Questprobe game featuring a Marvel star will be released.

The first issue of our *Questprobe Limited Series* of comics, also featuring the Hulk and Doctor Strange (of course) will be on sale April 24th. And, of course, every three months or so thereafter, whenever a new game debuts, the corresponding Questprobe Limited Series comic book will also be released.

You can play and enjoy each game without ever reading the comics (and without having played any of the other games in the series). And, you can read and enjoy the comics (which we'd do even if there were no games, frankly. They're that good!) without playing the games. Lucky for me. I've had this fear of computers ever since I was bitten by a pocket calculator as a child. But, of course, it's *better* if you partake of both the comics and the games — so, hey, enrich the experience, why don'tcha? Go for the gusto!

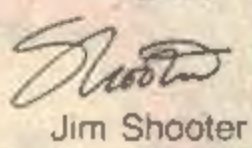
The game graphics, by the way, are designed by top Marvel artists.

All right, enough of this! Now you know what's going on. Make up your minds what you're doing and go do it! And be sure to let us know what you think . . .

TILL NEXT MONTH . . .

Hang in there! Stay well and come back, 'cause heavens knows, we need you!

Best



Jim Shooter
Editor in Chief

HYPE BOX

MARVEL FANFARE #15 — Okay, true believers, this is it! BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH returns to MARVEL with a full-length **Thing** tale that he's written *and* illustrated! Barry's a genuine living legend in the comic world, and if you remember his classic **Conan** tales you know why. If not, here's your chance to see how he earned that reputation. Don't miss it — there's no telling when you'll get another!

ALPHA FLIGHT #12 — Perhaps the most eagerly anticipated story of the year — and the most fearfully dreaded! This issue, a member of Alpha Flight will *die!* Written and drawn by JOHN BYRNE.

CHECK LIST

- ☐ DAREDEVIL #208
- ☐ NEW MUTANTS #17
- ☐ MARVEL SUPER HEROES SECRET WARS (Limited Series) #3
- ☐ CONAN THE KING #23
- ☐ AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #254
- ☐ CAPTAIN AMERICA #295
- ☐ THOR #345
- ☐ INDIANA JONES #19
- ☐ CRYSTAR #8
- ☐ THOR #345
- ☐ INDIANA JONES #19
- ☐ CRYSTAR #8
- ☐ MOON KNIGHT #30
- ☐ INCREDIBLE HULK #297
- ☐ AVENGERS #245
- ☐ CONAN THE BARBARIAN #160
- ☐ MARVEL TALES #165 — Reprinting "Bring Back My Goblin to Me" by STAN LEE and STEVE DITKO, from Amazing Spider-Man #27
- ☐ X-MEN #163
- ☐ ROM #56
- ☐ POWER MAN/IRON FIST #107
- ☐ G.I. JOE #25
- ☐ FANTASTIC FOUR #268
- ☐ MARVEL TEAM-UP #143 — Featuring Spider-Man and Starfox
- ☐ IRON MAN #184
- ☐ PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #92
- ☐ DEFENDERS #133
- ☐ STAR WARS #85
- ☐ ALPHA FLIGHT #12
- ☐ THE THING #13

MARVEL MAGAZINES

- ☐ SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #101
- ☐ MARVEL AGE #16
- ☐ MARVEL FANFARE #15

EPIC COMICS

- ☐ EPIC ILLUSTRATED #24
- ☐ COYOTE #6

ASSORTED GOODIES

- ☐ X-MEN TRADE PAPERBACK — Reprinting the Phoenix saga from X-Men #'s 129-137, by CHRIS CLAREMONT, JOHN BYRNE, and TERRY AUSTIN.